

Transforming Acute Care Ecosystem (TACE)

Revolutionising Community Healthcare

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Better Health. With You.



NurseFirst is a helpline manned by nurses trained in emergency triage. Residents can call the helpline for advice on where they can seek treatment for acute but not life-threatening conditions.



INTRODUCTION

In Singapore, Emergency Departments are chronically overburdened with non-emergencies, as these cases (P3 and below) generally make up almost half of ED attendances.

This issue is likely exacerbated by individuals, particularly patients themselves, struggling to accurately assess the severity of their conditions when using their own heuristics. Moreover, the public's awareness of available care site options is limited, typically confined to GPs or EDs, leading to inappropriate use of the latter for conditions like uncomplicated minor issues and routine chronic care. This misuse redirects crucial resources away from genuine emergencies, contributing to the escalation of healthcare costs.

TACE, or Transforming Acute Care Ecosystem programme, was developed and it seeks to revolutionize and optimize acute care delivery by addressing the issue of unnecessary ED visits. In strengthening Primary Care linkages, establishing the Urgent Care Centre @Admiralty and the care navigation tool, NurseFirst, this approach is not only cost-effective but also minimizes resource utilization compared to the ED.

AIM

Despite Singapore's compact size, the healthcare and social care spaces suffer from fragmentation, with different organizations catering to distinct patient groups and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the existence and services of the Urgent Care Centre (UCC) are relatively new, and many patients may remain unaware of its availability.

By bolstering intermediate care in the community and establishing a comprehensive ecosystem for managing acute care in the North, TACE's primary objective is to change the pre-existing healthcare-seeking behaviour of the patient group, who are accustomed to the accessibility and convenience of a one-stop comprehensive care facility, usually the ED.

METHODOLOGY

TACE comprises of 3 key initiatives:

Primary Care Partnership office (PCPO): PCPO serves as a liaison with Primary Care Partners, establishing formal relationship with private GP clinics in the Woodlands region through GPFirst. This enabled PCPO to form other collaborations that strengthen right-siting of care, such as Shared Care; and population health initiatives such as Community Health Posts.

Urgent Care Centre (UCC): Positioned as an intermediate care site, it was built to decentralize urgent care not requiring hospital-level services. It also acts as a referral centre for primary care by providing many services that are typically associated with the emergency department such as on-site laboratory and X-ray services, further reducing unnecessary ED referrals

NurseFirst Helpline: Acting as a care navigation tool, the nurse-fronted helpline comes into play by advising callers on the right site of care (ED, UCC, GP, or self-care) based evaluation of the caller's presenting condition using and decision support system.

With these 3 initiatives in place, strategies for change were identified and prioritised for the development of the acute care ecosystem in the community:

- 1. Primary Care Linkage Strengthening** – Via GPFirst, residents are encouraged to consult their General Practitioners (GPs) for mild to moderate conditions. The program offers a \$50 discount should a visit to the Emergency Department (ED) become necessary,
- 2. Reducing Readmissions of Post Discharge** - Patients are followed up by the Virtual Care Centre team (VCC) and are empowered through the appropriate follow up care post-discharge, seamless transition of care from hospital to community setting, and right siting them to Primary Care providers.
- 3. Developing Community Assets** - Under TACE, on the ground resources are actively established to identify individuals who could potentially become high utilizers of healthcare resources if left unattended in the community. Examples include Community Nursing Posts, Community Nursing, and Community Pharmacists, which serve as essential components in this initiative.
- 4. Campaign and Public Education** - A communication roadmap has been devised to enhance health literacy, emphasizing self-care and promote awareness of new services available such as UCC and NurseFirst. The campaign efforts extend to engaging employers to recognize medical certificates issued by UCC, fostering broader recognition and acceptance.

Choose the right service based on your condition

General Practitioner (GP)
For common medical conditions such as cough, runny nose or simple sprains.
GPFIRST
Scan to see the list of participating GP clinics

Urgent Care Centre (UCC) @ Admiralty
For non-emergency conditions requiring urgent attention such as asthma, dehydration, fever, insect bites and stings, persistent nausea and vomiting, nosebleeds, sore eyes or simple strains and sprains.
878 Woodlands Drive 71, #01-01
Kampong Admiralty, Singapore 730676
08.00am - 11.00pm daily (including Public Holidays)
Last registration at 10.30pm

Emergency Department (ED)
When life or limb is at risk.
The team is 24/7 ready for any emergency and critical situations.

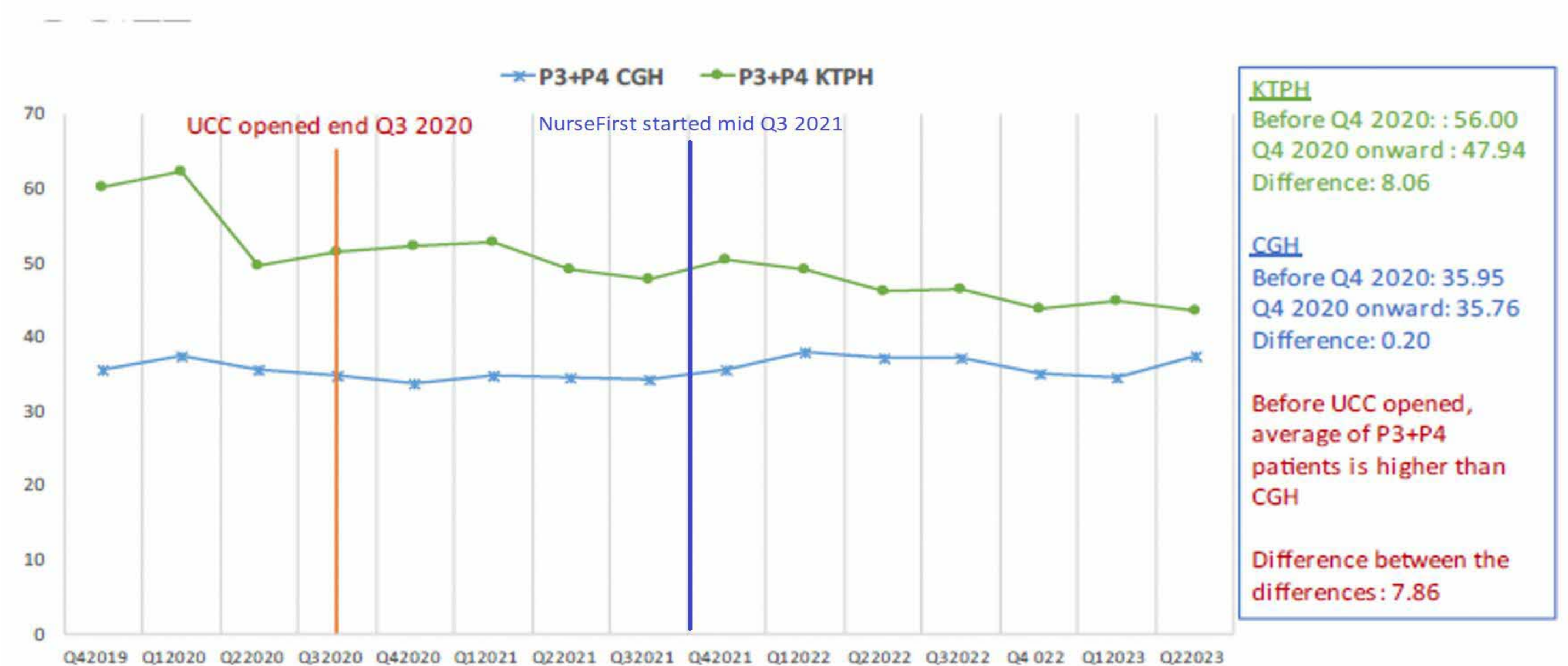
If you are unsure where to go, call NurseFirst at 6262 6262 for advice.

Information is accurate as of May 2023.
For more information, please visit www.wh.com.sg/pre-hospital-care

Managed by Woodlands Health and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

RESULTS

Figure 1: Proportion of P3 and P4 patients: KPTH and CGH



Since Sep 2020, TACE has successfully managed 3,939 UCC Referrals and 8,107 ED Referrals via GPFirst, indicative of a substantial reduction in ED visits.

During this period, UCC@Admiralty has attended to 48,000 patients, from diverse referring parties and residential areas, underscoring the extensive reach of its efforts. With a less than 10% referral rate to the ED, the avoided ED visits translate into significant cost savings for both patients and the healthcare system. Local GPs are actively encourage to locum for skills update and enhancement, as well as understanding the available support. This encouragement has led to an increased number of referrals to the UCC.

NurseFirst has handled 10,000 calls since November 2021, 64% triaged away from the ED, leading to significant cost savings. Following NTFGH's placement of the NurseFirst hotline on its home page and ED website, there was a substantial increase in calls from the west, accounting for 30% of calls as individuals intending to visit NTFGH ED began contacting NurseFirst first, offering an opportunity for behavioural change.

CONCLUSIONS

TACE is transforming the landscape of acute care delivery in Singapore, promoting efficient resource utilisation and empowering patients to access appropriate care in the community.

Challenges faced in establishing the initiatives in a turbulent time had shown that collaborating with like-minded cross-institutional partners and engaging multiple stakeholders was crucial in navigating these challenges.

Through strengthening partnerships and expansion of initiatives to enhance healthcare delivery and promote community health literacy, TACE is able to shape a better comprehensive and holistic care framework for the patients, ensuring a more integrated and effective healthcare ecosystem

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